



**COOK SHIRE COUNCIL**  
**ECONOMIC PROFILE**

2015



**Cook Shire**  
**COUNCIL**

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

Economic Development Officer  
Cook Shire Council

PO BOX 3  
Cooktown QLD 4895  
(07) 4069 5444  
[mail@cook.qld.gov.au](mailto:mail@cook.qld.gov.au)  
[www.cook.qld.gov.au](http://www.cook.qld.gov.au)

## **SOURCES**

[www.economy.id.com.au/cook](http://www.economy.id.com.au/cook)  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Office of Economic and Statistical Research  
Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
National Institute of Economic and Industry Research  
Cummings Economics

## GEOGRAPHY

Cook Shire is the largest shire in Queensland in terms of land area. From the Bloomfield River in the south to just north of the Jardine River it covers over 100,000 square kilometres and occupies 80% of Cape York Peninsula.

Geographically, Cook Shire is the meeting place of the Great Barrier Reef, the Wet Tropics and the Outback. It is the location of many National Parks along with other protected areas and conservation zones. Cooktown is 331kms from Cairns (3 1/2 hours by car) and 266kms from Mareeba via the fully sealed Mulligan Highway.

## WEATHER

Cook Shire enjoys a mild tropical climate with the wet season running from January to March being the hottest time of the year. April to December brings a drier period with cooler weather and temperatures averaging around 27 degrees Celsius. In summer, Cooktown is usually 5 degrees cooler than Cairns.

## HISTORY

Cooktown is one of Queensland's long-surviving historic towns. Named after Lt. James Cook, Cooktown was the landing site of his vessel HM Bark Endeavour, where a seven-week stay included repairs to the ship, collection of native flora and fauna and meaningful interactions with the local Indigenous people.

One hundred years later, the area was transformed as an export and supply port for the newly-established goldfields along the Palmer River. Cooktown's population swelled as prospectors arrived from around the world. Population estimates vary widely, but there were probably around 7,000 people in the area and about 4,000 permanent residents in the town by 1880. At that time, Cooktown boasted a large number of hotels and guest houses (including 47 licensed pubs). A Chinese community of many thousands grew in the goldfields and in the town itself. The Chinese played an important role in the early days of Cooktown. They came originally as prospectors, but many established market gardens, supplying the town and the goldfields with fruit, vegetables and rice, while others opened shops.

## HOW WE LIVE

### Townships

Cook Shire has a tough and colourful past built around agriculture and mining. Today, its vibrant culture, diverse history and unique environment attracts people from across the country and around the globe.

Approximately 4,500 people live in Cook Shire. The major township is Cooktown with smaller population centres at Marton, Laura, Lakeland, Coen, Ayton, Rossville, Helenvale and Portland Roads, and offshore settlements including Lizard and Haggerstone Island.

Cook Shire is enriched by the unique contributions of its small communities:

- Coen prides itself on being the service centre for the northern region of the Shire;
- Laura is famous for its amazing rock art and the Quinkan and Regional Cultural Centre;
- Lakeland is home to key farming and grazing industries; and
- Rossville, Ayton and Portland Roads are recognised for their low impact lifestyles, and niche horticulture and eco-tourism ventures.



## POPULATION OF COOK SHIRE

As at 30 June 2013, the resident population of Cook Shire Local Government Area (LGA) was 4,393. The percentage increase from June 2012 was 1.85%. According to the 2011 Census QuickStats (by all people, usual residents, State suburbs), the towns with the highest population in Cook Shire are Cooktown (2,339), Coen (416) and Bloomfield (403, including Rossville).

## POPULATION BY AGE

Cook Shire boasts a higher than average working population. As a lifestyle destination however there is a lot of opportunity in Cook Shire to further develop retirement accommodation and health services to support the growth in the ageing population. The age structure of Cook Shire's local labour force is indicative of the skill-levels and experience that local businesses can draw upon and the growth and development of the region.

**TABLE 1: Estimated resident population by age by LGA, Cook Shire, 30 June 2013**

	POPULATION BY AGE									
	0-14		15-24		25-44		45-64		65+	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Cook Shire</b>	791	18.0	475	10.8	1,446	32.9	1,218	27.7	463	10.5
<b>TNQ Region</b>	49,321	20.9	28,943	12.2	64,169	27.2	63,206	26.7	30,702	13.0
<b>QLD</b>	924,352	19.8	642,291	13.8	1,343,426	28.2	1,142,755	24.5	633,979	13.6

Source: ABS3235.0 Population by age and sex, Regions of Australia 2013, Queensland Treasury and Trade estimates

**TABLE 2: Registered births by LGA, TNQ Region and Cook Shire LGA, 2013**

	NUMBER		NUMBER		NUMBER
<b>Cook Shire</b>	49	<b>Cassowary Coast</b>	348	<b>Tablelands</b>	280
<b>Cairns</b>	2,338	<b>Mareeba</b>	249	<b>QLD</b>	63,354

Source: ABS 3301.0 Births, Australia, 2013

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

At 30 June 2031, the population for the Cook Shire is projected to be 5,527 persons. The population for the region is projected to increase by an average annual growth rate of 1.1 per cent over the 20 year period between 2011 and 2031. Approved project developments as identified in the Cook Shire Council Major Projects document could have a positive effect on population numbers and this growth rate is likely to increase.

**TABLE 3: Projected populations by LGA, Cook Shire, 2011 to 2031**

	PROJECTED POPULATION AS AT 30 JUNE					AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2011 TO 2031
	- number -					%
<b>Cook Shire</b>	4,409	4,765	5,037	5,320	5,527	1.1
<b>TNQ Region</b>	255,851	277,873	298,962	319,803	341,365	1.5

Source: Queensland Government Population Projections (2013 edition) and Queensland Treasury and Trade estimates

## INDIGENOUS POPULATION

At the time of the 2011 Census, the Cook Shire had 831 persons who stated they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Indigenous persons made up 20.0 per cent of the total population (compared with 9.6 in Tropical North Queensland).

Of the 831 persons usually resident in the region who state they are of Indigenous origin, 742 persons stated they were Aboriginal, 28 persons stated they were Torres Strait Islander, and 61 persons stated they were both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Cook Shire represents a multi-cultural society which supports a variety of cultures and nationalities living together amicably. "Two cultures, one people" is a slogan penned by the Cooktown Re-enactment Association, now used in wider circles to represent the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the community.

**TABLE 4: Number of persons by Indigenous status by LGA, Cook Shire, 2011**

	INDIGENOUS PERSONS							TOTAL PERSONS
	Aboriginal	Torres Strait Islander	Both	Total	Non-Indigenous persons			
	– number –			number	%	number	%	
<b>Cook Shire</b>	742	28	61	831	20.0	3,003	72.3	<b>4,152</b>
<b>TNQ Region</b>	13,978	5,129	3,225	22,332	9.6	194,061	83.7	<b>231,718</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011, Indigenous Profile – I02

## INCOME LEVELS

According to The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cook Shire had 1,085 persons aged 15 years and over who stated that their total personal weekly income was less than \$400. A high percentage of Indigenous and short-term seasonal workers contributes to the low socio-economic status of the Cook Shire region.

**TABLE 5: Number of persons by total personal weekly income by LGA, Cook Shire, 2011**

LGA	\$0 TO \$599		\$600 TO \$1,249		\$1,250 TO \$1,999		\$2,000 OR MORE		TOTAL
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
<b>Cook Shire</b>	497	26.4	514	27.3	324	17.2	254	13.5	<b>1,589</b>
<b>TNQ Region</b>	21,045	23.2	24,577	27.1	16,873	18.6	15,947	17.6	<b>78,442</b>

Source: Key statistics of local residents, Local Market, Economyid.com



## GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

Local Gross Regional Product (GRP) gives the value of economic activity which accrues to the local area after taxes and dividends are paid outside the area. A large number of major projects has increased output in the Shire and provided a strong basis for long term growth. GRP has been growing at a steady rate despite the heavy impact of the global financial crisis and high unemployment rate.

TABLE 6: Gross Regional Product by LGA, Cook Shire, 2013

Year	COOK SHIRE COUNCIL		TNQ REGION	
	GRP \$m	% change from previous year	GRP \$m	% change from previous year
2014	1,089	-7.7	12,763	-2.3
2013	1,180	+1.5	13,063	-0.1
2012	1,162	+37.4	13,073	+3.1

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) 2014.

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The number of unemployed persons aged 15 years and over in the Cook Shire at September 2014 was 285. This represented an unemployment rate of 13.19 per cent. In comparison, the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region had an unemployment rate of 7.29 per cent. Cook Shire's large Indigenous population, short term seasonal workers and remoteness of communities are likely contributors to this figure.

TABLE 7: Unemployment and labour force by LGA, Cook Shire September 2014

	UNEMPLOYED	LABOUR FORCE	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
	– number –		%
Cook Shire	285	2,161	13.19
TNQ region	7,823	107,368	7.29

Source: Economic Indicators, Unemployment, Economyid.com

FIGURE 1: Quarterly unemployment rate, Cook Shire, Queensland and Australia, 2008 to June 2014

The unemployment spike 2009, heavily influenced by the global financial crisis has started to show signs of improvement. Unemployment between 2009 and 2013 has dropped over 10%. This is a direct reflection of a revamped tourism industry and business confidence.



## RESIDENT LABOUR FORCE

At the time of the 2011 Census, public administration and safety was the largest industry of employment for usual residents in the Cook Shire, with 224 persons or 14.1 per cent of the employed labour force. Other industries with relatively large numbers of employed persons included agriculture, forestry and fishing (208 persons) and accommodation and food services (204 persons).

Industry sector statistics in the Cook Shire are influenced by a range of factors including:

- The economic base and employment opportunities available within commuting distance;
- The educational levels of the local population; and
- The working and social aspirations of the local population.

**TABLE 8: Employment by industry by LGA, Cook Shire, 2011**

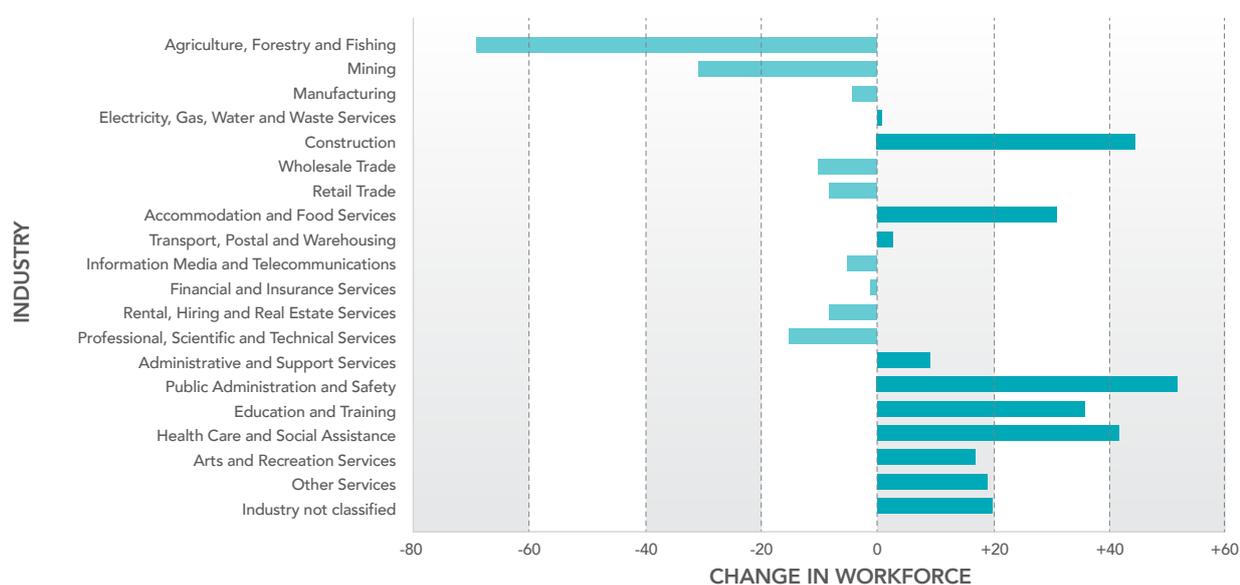
COOK SHIRE		2011	
Industry	Number	%	Queensland%
Public Administration and Safety	224	14.1	6.7
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	208	13.1	2.7
Accommodation and Food Services	204	12.9	7.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	170	10.7	11.9
Construction	164	10.3	9.0
Education and Training	128	8.1	7.9
Retail Trade	128	8.1	10.7
Industry not classified	69	4.4	2.4
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	50	3.2	5.3
Other Services	42	2.6	3.9
Administrative and Support Services	41	2.6	3.2
Arts and Recreation Services	41	2.6	1.4
Mining	25	1.6	2.6
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	22	1.4	1.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	22	1.4	6.5
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	15	0.9	1.8
Wholesale Trade	13	0.8	3.6
Manufacturing	11	0.7	8.4
Financial and Insurance Services	5	0.3	2.7
Information Media and Telecommunications	4	0.3	1.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,586</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2011. Compiled and presented in economy.id.

## CHANGE IN LOCAL LABOUR FORCE

The largest changes by industry between 2006 and 2011 in the Cook Shire were Public Administration and Safety which saw the biggest increase since 2006, with an additional 52 people in the local labour force while Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing decreased by 69 people. This is the result of several major government department buildings that have been constructed since 2006. The next census in 2016 will highlight some significant changes to this data which will reflect the amount of building approvals and our noticeable population increase.

FIGURE 2: Change in local labour force industry of employment 2006 to 2011



## BUILDING APPROVALS

The value of building approvals in the Cook Shire Council was \$11m in the 2013/14 financial year, which was 0.07% of the total value in Queensland. Cook Shire's building approvals are used as a leading indicator of the general level of residential development, economic activity, employment and investment. Residential building activity depends on many factors that vary with the state of the economy including interest rates, availability of mortgage funds, government spending, and business investment. Large financial changes or shocks, such as the -51% change caused by a number of Government funded buildings in 2013/14 can be observed in the data. However, the number of building approvals can fluctuate substantially from year to year simply as a result of the short-term nature of many construction projects, and the cyclical nature of the industry.

TABLE 9: Value of total building approvals

Financial year	COOK SHIRE COUNCIL		QUEENSLAND		Cook Shire Council as a % of Queensland
	\$('000)	% change	\$('000)	% change	
2013-14	11,232	-51%	16,268,428	-9.7%	0.07%
2012-13	21,818	+30%	16,652,937	+12.6%	0.13%
2011-12	7,203	+8.6%	13,216,051	-8.7%	0.05%
2010-11	8,302	-39%	15,053,893	+8.3%	0.06%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Building Approvals, Australia, catalogue number 8731.0.

## TOURISM SNAPSHOT

The number of visitors and residents coming to Cook Shire continues to increase as road conditions and facilities improve. The Mulligan Highway was sealed in 2006 providing an all-weather access route from Cairns. From 2005 to 2013 the Cooktown and Cape York Visitor Information Centre's (VIC) visitation numbers have doubled from 13,713 to 26,889.

## STAY

From 4 star resorts, to youth hostels and everything in-between, Cook Shire has a varying range of accommodation options for even the most discerning traveller. There are a number of caravan parks to choose from, camping is available at most roadhouses along the Peninsula Development Road as well as basic self contained and shared amenities style rooms. If bush hospitality is more your style, there are several 'farm-stay' choices offering unique experiences.

## EAT AND DINE

There are a number of restaurants and cafes to choose from, each with their own individual menus and dining experiences. Cook Shire is RV Friendly and welcomes all visitors from around the world travelling in fully self-contained RVs. In 2013, approximately 641 permits were issued with a third of them returning surveys. From the data collected, the indications are that respondents spent an average of \$292.00 during their visit.

## EXPLORE

Several tour operators work in the region to provide diverse experiences to visitors; some of these include: fishing charters, croc spotting and bird watching tours, aboriginal rock art and culture tours, horse riding and historical tours. Cairns-based tour bus companies and tagalongs include a visit to Cooktown as part of their itineraries and in doing so, boost visitation to the town's museums and VIC.

## EVENTS

Many events are held throughout the year, none as big as the Cooktown Discovery Festival on the June long weekend, involving a fully costumed re-enactment of the landing of Captain James Cook.

2020 will mark the 250th year celebration (Sestercentennial) of Captain Cook's landing of the HMV Endeavour and to celebrate, the Australian National Maritime Museum will be bringing replicating his voyage from Whitby to New Zealand and Australia starting in 2019. The Endeavour Replica will be berthed in Cooktown for a period of 48 days, to reflect the longest onshore stay for his entire voyage in 1770. Special events are being planned for this internationally significant voyage.

## TOURISM ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY

Cook Shire and in particular Cooktown punches above its weight in terms of bed spaces per head of capita. 7 beds per head indicates a strong representation of tourism, as a dominant industry within the Shire. The range of accommodation types is equally impressive from youth hostels and basic camp facilities to four star accommodation on the waterfront.

**TABLE 10: Establishments, rooms and bed spaces, comparisons by LGA, Cook Shire 2014**

LGA	ESTABLISHMENTS	ROOMS	BED SPACES
	– number –		
Cook Shire	27	347	645
TNQ Region	172	10,744	31,060
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>11,011</b>	<b>31,705</b>

Source: Cook Shire Council Economic Development Data Estimates

## VISIT

For more information visit  
[www.cooktownandcapeyork.com](http://www.cooktownandcapeyork.com)

## VALUE OF TOURISM IN CAPE YORK

Estimated expenditure in the Cape York area would be:

- Overnight domestic visitor \$84M
- Domestic day visitor \$2M
- International visitors \$12M

Direct employment in Cape York is estimated to be about 310 with most being in accommodation, cafes, restaurants, transport, attractions and services.

Takings for tourism hotels, motels and serviced apartments is estimated to be nearly \$4M.

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS Census Data

## TOURISM PATTERNS

Tourism in the Cape York area has some distinctive features. Essentially there are three distinctive areas for tourism movements:

- Cooktown and the south east comprising the coastal area to Cooktown and the inland Mulligan Highway route via Lakeland to Cooktown.

Much of the road-borne visitor traffic will either travel up and back to Cooktown via the Mulligan Highway or complete a circuit.

- The Cooktown Hinterland comprising the segments of the Palmer River west of the Mulligan Highway, Laura, Lakefield and Cape Melville/Bathurst Bay area.

Visitors going into this area will tend to be in 4WD vehicles and camping, although the sealing of the road to Laura is changing this pattern.

- The Cape York Area - once visitors pass by Laura and Musgrave Road House they are usually heading to Weipa and the Upper Cape York area and often right through to the Northern Peninsula Area and the northern tip.

## COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Cook Shire has the following community assets and infrastructure:

- Events Centre (purpose-built Cyclone shelter for Cooktown)
- National Broadband Network (NBN) rollout by June 2016
- Four early childhood education and care services
- Two aged housing service providers (36 places)
- Four police stations
- One ambulance station
- One fire station with other rural fire brigade services
- Six public schools including two high schools, private Christian college and Catholic Education Flexible Learning Centre
- Three hospitals with a helicopter landing pad at Cooktown and visiting specialist health services
- Three public libraries with access to the Rural Libraries Queensland online borrowing network
- One public swimming pool
- Numerous sporting grounds



### LOCATION

Cook Shire, located between reef and rainforests, National Parks and Indigenous communities, covers most of the eastern and central parts of Cape York Peninsula, the most northerly section of the Australian mainland. Cook Shire is by far one of the largest in Australia however it has the smallest amount of rateable properties in comparison. Identifying the Shire's key industries and working with our natural attractions will ensure our businesses continue to thrive, supporting a sustainable and liveable Shire.

### LAND

Travelling to Cooktown by road takes approximately 3 ½ hours from Cairns, at a distance of 331 kilometres, along the Mulligan Highway (sealed road). An alternative scenic route is approximately 234 kilometres along the Bloomfield track (4WD only). During the wet season it is important to check the road conditions prior to travelling. A bus service runs on both these routes several times a week, giving the locals and tourists more options to driving or flying.

The road from Lakeland into Laura was sealed in 2012 allowing access all year round, which has the potential to boost the economic growth of the region as well as increased visitation to the Quinkan & Regional Cultural Centre and local rock art tours.

The Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development has allocated \$210M to upgrade and weather-proof the Peninsula Development Road. The State Government has allocated a further \$50M to

upgrade roads and infrastructure in indigenous Cape communities. As the arterial transport route into Cape York, the upgrade to the Peninsula Development Road will provide vital infrastructure to support economic development of the Cape and future opportunities arising from the Northern Australia White Paper.

### AIR

Hinterland Aviation flies from Cairns and to both Cooktown and Coen most days of the week; Qantas flies from Cairns to Weipa and Horn Island daily; and Daintree Air operates air charter from Cairns to Cooktown, available seven days a week.

For the high end tourism market, there is always the option of helicopter charter flights; Sky Safari has been successful in obtaining a six year contract to be based on Lizard Island. This will provide visitors the 'once in a lifetime' experience to fly between Lizard Island and Cooktown and the opportunity to further enhance their trip with a land-based activity.

### SEA

Sea Swift operates a cargo vessel from Cairns to Seisia wharf (at the tip of Cape York); there are also several cruise ships that include Cooktown on their itineraries.

The Coral Princess includes Cooktown on their itinerary with regular visits planned throughout the year. Meanwhile several international cruise ships are including Cooktown as a port of call with four visits already planned during 2015/16.





For more information on Cook Shire Council's Economic Profile,  
contact the Economic Development and Community Services team,  
Cook Shire Council

T › +61 7 4069 5444 E › [mail@cook.qld.gov.au](mailto:mail@cook.qld.gov.au)  
[www.cook.qld.gov.au](http://www.cook.qld.gov.au)



**Cook Shire**  
COUNCIL